



2016 Legislative Session Wrap Up

March 14, 2016

Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops in Indiana regarding state and national matters.

The 2016 legislative session was positive with outcomes that will benefit those most in need. In some instances bills passed that will assist low income persons and the disabled; in other instances bills were stopped that would have caused further harm.

Positive bills include SB 325 and SB 11. **SB 325, Individual Saving Accounts**, updates the program wherein low income individuals are helped to amass assets that can enhance their ability to become self-sufficient. The bill now permits purchase of a vehicle as well as savings for housing and educational programs. The program provides tax credits for contributions used to match savings of those who qualify. A different tax credit program was established in **SB 11, ABLE savings accounts for persons with disability**. The accounts permitted in SB 11 will support disabled individuals. While **these passed with unanimous support**, another bill, **SB 132, Food assistance after drug conviction**, which would have allowed reformed drug addicts the opportunity to receive food stamps, **failed to pass the House after passing the Senate**. Budget concerns were raised to halt its progress; **we hope this will return next session**.

While SB 132 did not pass, **another bill which could have been harmful was stopped. HB 1340, Long term small loans**, resulted in a **study committee rather than an expansion of payday lending**. The bill initially would extend the terms and amounts of payday lending. **ICC along with others**, affected by payday lending, **were able to convince legislators that there are alternatives to payday lending** which effectively assist individuals rather than keep persons in a cycle of debt.

Prolife bills included SB 272, Palliative Care and Quality of Life Council. The intent of the bill is to promote and expand the use and availability of palliative care in Indiana. Palliative care is a positive way to address the needs of persons who are facing very serious and fatal disease or illness. The two bills dealing with **Abortion, SB 313 and HB 1337 both passed their respective houses**. However, the **two were combined** as the Senate considered **HB 1337**; the **combined bill passed the House in the final days**. With its passage, Indiana public policy now provides that all fetal remains are to be treated with dignity and be either interred or cremated rather than being treated as medical waste. Also, abortions based solely on the sex, race or disability of the fetus is prohibited. In addition, areas where abortionists tried to undermine abortion laws are now clarified. **While positive law, we do expect legal challenges** from the abortion providers.

Education is always a popular topic during a legislative session. In addition to **changes coming to Indiana's ISTEP program**, a **positive change for the choice scholarship** (voucher)

program is an opportunity for families to access a voucher for second semester. Also, parents will now only have to endorse the tuition payment once each year rather than once a semester. This reduces administrative time considerably.

Finally, the much anticipated **bills regarding LGBT rights ended without a vote**. While the Senate discussed two bills and a bill passed out of committee, the **members of the Senate Republican caucus could not agree** on the details to move the bill. While the bill contained protections for religious institutions, it did not provide conscience protection for all persons and the LGBT community did not agree with the exemptions provided for religious institutions. Hence, **the issue remains a topic for future sessions**.

We are grateful for your interest and support throughout this session and look forward to your involvement again in 2017. In the meantime, **look for occasional updates regarding Congressional and Federal matters**. You are needed and your voice makes a difference.

In addition to the Update, one can obtain more detailed information regarding the bills, as well as detailed information about the legislative process and the Indiana General Assembly by clicking [here](#). You can also access the archived I-CAN Updates, ICC positions and other background information at the ICC website www.indianacc.org